

Braille Monitor



JUNE, 1984

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

JUNE 1984

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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* * *

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**THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND IS NOT AN ORGANIZATION
SPEAKING FOR THE BLIND—IT IS THE BLIND SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES**

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GAO RULES ON USES OF KENNELLY AMENDMENT FUNDS

We of the National Federation of the Blind have been saying for quite some time that all of those connected with the blindness field (including sometimes even the blind themselves) have increasingly tended to give too much emphasis and concentration to the state rehabilitation agencies and the traditional sources of funding for those agencies. When people think of bettering the lives of the blind, they almost automatically think of whether Congress and the state legislatures are appropriating enough money for the rehabilitation agencies, how big the agency staff is, and whether the agency is starting a new program or reducing or eliminating an old one. Everything revolves around the agency. There is a danger that the state agency can become the principal focus of the blind person's every thought and action—stifling initiative, diminishing opportunity, and creating an almost irresistible dependence and custodialism. It is understandable that the agency officials would foster this trend. After all, their jobs are at stake. The more they can be the absolute center of the lives of all of the blind, the more money to help blind people comes through them and their efforts, and the more they control services and jobs and training and tuition the greater is their prestige, their salaries, and their sense of self-importance.

Despite the fact that we often hear talk by state and federal officials that the present administration, or Congress,

or somebody has cut federal rehabilitation appropriations, this is not the case. Even if it were the case, it would not be the end of the world. There are alternative sources of funding for programs for the blind. All that is required is initiative and imagination coupled with the ability to work in the context of the spirit of the times.

An example of this can be found in the Kennelly Amendment to the Surface Transportation Act of 1982. This amendment was entirely the result of the work of the National Federation of the Blind, supported by Congresswoman Kennelly and other legislative leaders. The Federation drafted the language and worked with the appropriate Congressional leaders to get the amendment adopted. It must be emphasized that no other organization or agency in the blindness field was involved or gave assistance.

Simply stated, the amendment provides that vending machines may be located along interstate highways and that a priority in operating such machines and receiving the income from them must be given to the agency in each state which administers the Randolph-Sheppard Act—in other words, the state rehabilitation agency for the blind. Of course, the state agency can be too incompetent, too lacking in initiative or push, or simply too lazy or too wedded to traditional methods of funding and behavior to take advantage of the opportunity we have made available; but the opportunity is there. It can mean hundreds of thousands of dollars for services for the

blind in each state. It can mean millions of dollars in many of the states if imaginative and appropriate action is taken.

When the Kennelly Amendment was adopted, some of the state agencies (instead of embracing it and trying to find positive ways of making use of it) attempted to play it down. They said that since it was to be handled in each state by the agency responsible for administering the Randolph-Sheppard Act it had limited value and could be used only for the purposes for which regular vending machine income under the Randolph-Sheppard program can be used. We pointed out to them (as did Congresswoman Kennelly) that this was not the case, that the Kennelly Amendment income could be used for any program which state law permitted the state agency for the blind to operate. To say the least, the foot dragging, skepticism, and lack of positive action on the part of some of the state agencies can only be described as annoying. It is almost as if because they did not think the idea up and get it adopted, they want nothing to do with it—this despite the fact of their continuous cry that they need more money and that they wish to provide better services.

To clarify the matter and to leave absolutely no doubt concerning the broad uses for which the state agencies could spend the money, the National Federation of the Blind asked Mrs. Kennelly early in 1983 to request a ruling from the General Accounting Office. Such a ruling would settle the matter once and for all, and it now has; for the ruling has now been given. There is no reason why the state rehabilitation agencies throughout the country should not now

move forward with speed and determination to take advantage of this funding source and provide needed services. However, we must not leave it entirely to their discretion and willingness to act. We must see that they do it.

Here are a letter and a memorandum from James Gashel, Director of Governmental Affairs of the National Federation of the Blind, followed by the full text of the official ruling of the General Accounting Office:

Baltimore, Maryland
January 18, 1983

The Honorable Barbara Kennelly
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Kennelly:

Your legislation—permitting state agencies for the blind to establish vending operations in rest, recreation, and safety areas on the federal interstate system—became law with the signing of Public Law 97-424. This was a great personal victory for you, as well as a triumph of immense potential for all blind people in the United States. We appreciate what you have done and applaud your efforts. Also, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to help in passing the amendment.

The state agencies for the blind will soon gear up to take advantage of the new legislation. Because of the broad language of the statute, early guidance for effective implementation will be especially critical. I am sure you agree that the most relevant consideration is how best to insure that the

maximum number of blind people will receive the benefits which are potentially now available to them as a result of the new authority.

The key word is "potential." The amendment, standing alone, does not prescribe a specific program of implementation, nor was it ever intended that it should do so. This ought to be left to each state agency for the blind, with participation by blind representatives in making overall policy decisions. Planning in this way, at the state and local level, is the best way to realize the full potential of this legislation.

A legal analysis and opinion from a recognized authority (such as the General Accounting Office) would be most helpful in providing essential guidance at this time. The issue of greatest concern to the states will be what role can the Kennelly amendment play in the overall scheme of services provided to the blind? The amendment does not shed light on this. The clear implication is that the blind service agencies in each state are free to implement whatever strategy seems best designed to assure that the blind people they serve will receive the benefits of the law. Two forms of benefit are particularly obvious. One is the possibility that some blind persons might be placed in employment as blind vendors, deriving remuneration from servicing and maintaining the vending machines which may be installed pursuant to the new authority. Another possibility (the plan used in Connecticut) is that state agencies might contract the vending service to commercial suppliers and in turn receive commission payments. Some states might choose combinations of these alternatives. In any event, it would seem that the

state's responsibility is to assure that as much benefit as possible is derived for the blind population.

In this connection the question arises as to whether there is any legal limitation on the use of funds which a state agency for the blind may derive from vending operations authorized under the Kennelly amendment. The apparent answer is that there is not, since the amendment is silent on the matter. The state agencies are authorized to conduct vending concession operations in areas on the interstate system, but no condition is placed on the use of revenues derived from the sales. If this interpretation is correct, then a state agency might be free to use the funds in the support of a wide variety of services designed to help the blind. Such assistance could include paying costs for higher education or vocational training for the blind; providing books, tools, and equipment needed by blind persons seeking remunerative employment; or for the establishment of small businesses on behalf of blind people. In short, it is conceivable that the proceeds derived from vending installations under the Kennelly amendment could be used for a broad range of job training and employment services aimed at helping the blind. This would be a most desirable policy, as it would foster the full integration of the blind into the mainstream of competitive employment. If this interpretation of the statute is correct, the Kennelly amendment offers the real possibility of providing major funding to underwrite the efforts which the state agencies are making in support of employment opportunities for the blind. So, the threshold question is what federal limitation, if any, is

there on revenues derived by a state agency for the blind participating in the Kennelly amendment?

As I have indicated earlier, guidance on this point would be most helpful to the state agencies as they attempt to implement the new provisions of the law. Please be assured of our continuing wish to assist you in any way possible during the implementation of this legislation. The promise and potential are enormous. The blind throughout the country are excited about the prospects and grateful for your help.

Cordially yours,
James Gashel

Director of Governmental Affairs
National Federation of the Blind

April 10, 1984

From: James Gashel
Director of Governmental Affairs
National Federation of the Blind

Re: Use of income derived from vending machines operated under the Kennelly Amendment

Pursuant to our request filed last year with Representative Barbara Kennelly, the Government Accounting Office has now given an opinion concerning the use of income from vending machines operated at interstate highway rest stops. The opinion holds that the uses of income from interstate highway vending machines are not limited to the purposes for using vending machine income received by the states under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Thus, it would

be possible for states to devote income derived from the Kennelly Amendment to programs such as establishing small businesses for blind people or for any other purpose authorized by state law.

Comptroller General
of the United States
Washington, D.C.
February 28, 1984
B-210825

The Honorable Barbara B. Kennelly
House of Representatives

Dear Mrs. Kennelly:

You have requested in your letter dated February 3, 1983, our legal analysis and opinion on whether the Randolph-Sheppard Act places any limitations on the use of income derived from vending machines placed at rest areas along interstate highways as authorized by Section 111 of the Surface Transportation Act of 1982. Section 111 of the Surface Transportation Act, Pub. L. No. 97-424, 96 Stat. 2106, January 6, 1983, to be placed as a note to 23 U.S.C. Sec. 111, authorizes States to operate vending machine services at rest areas along the interstate highway system. The Randolph-Sheppard Act contains special income distribution features for the benefit of blind licensees where vending machines are not operated by those licensees. It is your concern that application of the Randolph-Sheppard income distribution provisions would limit the flexibility of the State agencies for the blind to the detriment of program needs. You submitted a letter from the National Federation of the

Blind which also suggests that the Randolph-Sheppard income distribution provisions should not apply in this instance.

For the reasons discussed below, we conclude that the income earned by States from vending machines under this Act accrues to each State for use in accordance with the law of the state where it is earned.

The question you present arises from reading Section 111 in connection with the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Section 111 provides:

"Sec. 111. Notwithstanding section 111 of title 23, United States Code, before October 1, 1983, any State may permit the placement of vending machines in rest and recreation areas and in safety rest areas constructed or located on rights-of-way of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways in such State. Such vending machines may only dispense such food, drink, and other articles as the State highway department determines are appropriate and desirable. Such vending machines may only be operated by the State. In permitting the placement of vending machines under this Section, the State shall give priority to vending machines which are operated through the State licensing agency designated pursuant to section 2(a)(5) of the Act of June 20, 1936, commonly known as the Randolph-Sheppard Act (20 U.S.C. 107a(a)(5)). The costs of installation, operation, and maintenance of vending machines under this section shall not be eligible for Federal assistance under title 23, United States Code." (Emphasis added.)

The Randolph-Sheppard Act provides

that designated State agencies are to license blind vendors to operate vending machines on Federal property. 20 U.S.C. Sec. 107d-3. Vending machines income from machines operated on Federal property, but not by a blind licensee, is directed by the Act to the State licensing agency for application to specified purposes benefiting the blind licensees. Id.

As your letter points out, the vending machine income provisions of the Randolph-Sheppard Act apply only to services on Federal property. 20 U.S.C. Sec. 107d-3(a). According to the Department of Transportation there is only a remote possibility that any of the rest areas where vending machines will be located will be on "Federal property." Almost all rights-of-way, including rest areas, that are part of the interstate highway system are owned outright by the States. Accordingly, any vending machine income earned at such locations will not meet the fundamental criterion for coverage of the Randolph-Sheppard Act—that services be provided on Federal property. The exceptional situations where Federal property might be involved would occur only in those instances where interstate highways cross Federal land acquired for purposes other than maintenance of the highway. Further, property under the actual control of the State probably is not "Federal property" for purposes of the Randolph-Sheppard Act even if the ultimate title rests with the Federal Government. However, the Department of Transportation has informed us that it will advise States of the possibility that the Randolph-Sheppard limitation might apply to any vending areas constructed on Federal land.

Additionally, we received a report in this matter from the Department of Education, responsible for administering the Randolph-Sheppard Act. That report points out that the income distribution provisions of the Randolph-Sheppard Act apply to vending machines operated through entities competing with blind vendors, not from machines operated by the State licensing agencies themselves. But for the Act, no income from vending machines would be shared with blind vendors. In the case of vending machine income under Section 111, the priority given State agencies for the blind is designed to benefit blind persons irrespective of the Randolph-Sheppard Act provisions. Thus, even in the unlikely case of vending machines being operated at rest areas on Federal property, the State licensing agency would probably be receiving the benefits, and the Randolph-Sheppard Act provisions would probably not apply.

Given the factual setting, we do not believe Congress intended that the Randolph-Sheppard Act should limit the use of income derived by States exercising the authority given them by Section 111.

That Congress was aware of the relationship of Section 111 with the Randolph-Sheppard Act is clear from the priority given the Randolph-Sheppard State licensing agency in that section. But this reference indicates a Congressional intent that the application of the Randolph-Sheppard Act be limited. If it had been intended that the provision of 20 U.S.C. Sec. 107d-3, was to apply in isolated circumstances, this intent could have been specified in Section 111. We have examined the legislative history of Section 111 and can find no indication that Congress considered the possibility of rest areas ever being on "Federal property," or that if rest areas are on Federal property that the income would not go to a State licensing agency. This being the case, we would conclude that State income derived from vending machines at rest areas along interstate highways is not limited by 20 U.S.C. Sec. 107d-3 of the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

Unless released earlier by your Office, this opinion will be released after 30 days. As requested, a copy of your request letter is enclosed.

WYOMING BEGINS TO STIR

There are those who profess to have great difficulty understanding why many of the state rehabilitation agencies for the blind resent the organized blind movement. "After all," these people say, "how could there be any real controversy unless it is simply that the blind (this usually means the National

Federation of the Blind) are radical and unreasonable?"

The solution to this seeming mystery is not difficult to find. It has been explained repeatedly and clearly. However, recent events in the state of Wyoming give the answer once again.

Until recently the blind of Wyoming

were not strongly organized. Early in 1984 the National Federation of the Blind had a membership drive and strengthened and revitalized the affiliate. As a result, things are beginning to happen. The state affiliate is beginning to ask questions. One can predict with almost complete certainty that this will bring resentment and charges of militancy from the state agency.

For many years the state agency in Wyoming pretty much did as it pleased. The state Federation was not strong enough to serve as an active check and balance and hold the agency to account. That time is no more. In a recent letter state President Deanna Morss (joined by all of the other officers and board members of the affiliate) wrote a letter asking searching questions about the vending facilities program. Copies of the letter were sent to the Governor, members of Congress, state officials, and the National Office of the Federation. Wyoming is definitely on the move. Things are beginning to stir. This will undoubtedly cause a certain amount of controversy, regardless of how courteously and tactfully we behave. However, it will also result in the improvement of the lives of the blind of the state. The initial hostility on the part of the agency will pass, and we can look to an eventual future of partnership and progress. This is why we have a National Federation of the Blind. It is why we are willing to endure some of the attacks which we receive and why we are constantly gaining in momentum and accomplishment:

Casper, Wyoming

April 17, 1984

Mr. Alan Schultz
Facilities Consultant
Department of Vocational
Rehabilitation
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Dear Mr. Schultz:

The Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind of Wyoming met with you and Mr. David Andrews, Director of Administrative Services on Saturday, April 14, 1984, to discuss the Business Enterprise Program also known as the vending program.

We shared many of our concerns with you regarding the BEP Program in Wyoming. Our concerns are basically these:

1. According to the financial statements for the Wyoming vending Program RSA-15 October 1, 1979,--September 30, 1980, the net proceeds for Federal and State combined were \$140,723 and for October 1, 1982 through September 30, 1983, the net proceeds for Federal and State combined were \$76,953.

2. Many stands have been closed in Wyoming. Your reasons for this, as I understand it, were that the operators were not able to make a livable income. According to the financial statement RSA-15 for 79-80 the distribution went like this: Two vendors had a take home pay annually between \$3,000-\$6,000; 4 vendors made between \$9,000 and \$12,000; 2 vendors between \$12,000-\$15,000; and 2 vendors between \$19,000-\$24,000.

3. According to the same financial reports, the last time a potential new site for a vending facility was surveyed was in the year 1980-1981.

4. There is not one blind vendor in

the state of Wyoming.

5. Blind persons are not being told about BEP.

6. Visually impaired people now expressing interest in the BEP program are being told that they have to attend school in Colorado for six months with a contract to the Wyoming tax payers of around \$6,000, while previously vending has been taught successfully in Wyoming.

7. The Randolph-Sheppard Act governs cafeterias and vending stands on federal property. The Act gives priority to blind/visually impaired. The original contract for the facility in the Federal Building in Casper states that a temporary manager will be replaced by a blind operator within thirty days. Yet, there is a non-blind manager running the federal building and has been there for nearly three years.

When we met with you at our Board Meeting you told us that the Building Manager for the Federal Building in Casper wanted to turn the stand into a dry stand if a blind person became the manager and that the health department may harass a blind operator. Today Melanie Rudell contacted Jim O'Mara, the Building Manager for the Casper Federal Building. Jim O'Mara told Melanie that it was DVR that wanted to make the Federal Building a dry stand and that such a stand would not adequately meet the needs of the employees in that building. It is also our understanding that DVR has been wanting to make this Federal Building a dry stand for quite some time and that it really has nothing to do with having a blind operator in the stand. Why would your office take a successful cafeteria that is netting the vendor an annual income of \$26,094 according to the RSA-15 for 1982-1983

and turn it into a dry stand that would not meet the needs of the employees in that building?

We have also heard rumors to the effect that DVR intends to phase out the Business Enterprise Program. After all of the stands in Wyoming that have been closed, absolutely no new vending sites have been surveyed, a lack of recruiting blind and other physically handicapped into the vending program, and the fact that training is being done out of state which makes it difficult for potential vendors, we must ask: Is it true that your office is in the process of eliminating the Business Enterprise Program?

We would like to know who makes the decisions about changing the set-aside fee and the percentage that will be charged the vendor for set-aside. We would also like to have copies of accounting statements which show how the set-aside is being spent.

When we met with you and David Andrews, one of you said that DVR had a 96% placement of blind/visually impaired people in employment. We would like to know how many blind/visually impaired persons DVR has actually placed in competitive employment, since we believe the unemployment rate for blind people in this state is somewhere around 92%.

We believe that your department is in violation of the 1974 amendments to the Randolph-Sheppard Act because the vending program in each state is supposed to be increasing the number of sites by 10% annually, and Wyoming has continually reduced the number of sites that it has had. Another violation is the Federal Building in Casper being run by a non-blind operator.

We insist that DVR begin taking the necessary steps to bring the Business

Enterprise Program into conformity with the Federal laws. We expect DVR to begin promoting the Business Enterprise Program in this state.

This organization will do whatever is necessary to insure that the BEP in Wyoming is accomplishing what it was originally meant to do, and that is to provide the blind with employment.

We hope to be hearing from you soon as to the actions that you are taking to correct the violations of the federal

law.

Sincerely,

Deanna Morss, President
Russell Wooten, Vice President

Melanie Rudell, Treasurer

Jim Jones, Secretary

Larry Julian, Board Member

Frank Gonzales, Board Member

Ema Elithorpe, Board Member

National Federation of the Blind
of Wyoming

CBS GETS AN ANSWER

Earlier this year (see the April, 1984, edition of the Braille Monitor) Peggy Chong asked CBS to rethink some of its attitudes about blindness. Mrs. Chong pointed out specific instances of negative and false stereotypes put forth by CBS in some of its programming. Ms. Alice Henderson (CBS Vice President for Program Practices) replied by saying that perhaps CBS had demonstrated some insensitivity but that it was also doing some very positive things about blindness. Ms. Henderson asked Mrs. Chong to tune in the movie "Second Sight" as a prime example.

Mrs. Chong, who is conscientious as well as fair minded and reasonable, did as asked. She not only tuned in on "Second Sight" once but videotaped it for review and study. When she finished her analysis, she gave Ms. Henderson her critique:

Minneapolis, Minnesota

March 27, 1984

Dear Ms. Henderson:

I have had an opportunity to watch the movie "Second Sight," which was aired on Tuesday, March 13, 1984. In fact, I have seen the movie three times, having recorded it on video cassette for purposes of evaluation. I have also discussed parts of the movie with local members of the National Federation of the Blind in order to put things in a more proper perspective. You see, I did not like "Second Sight."

We in the National Federation of the Blind recognize that the long white cane and the dog guide each represent viable methods for traveling independently without sight. Whether a blind traveler chooses to use a dog or a cane is, we believe, a matter best left up to individual preference.

"Second Sight" implied (and not very

subtly, I might add) that blindness is extremely traumatic and a constant struggle for daily survival. It is made abundantly evident that the cane is not a safe way to travel. A number of examples will suffice to make the point:

Alex, the blind leading character, comes in out of the rain and says to her friend Robin, "See this thing? It's great for tapping its way from here to Duluth. But let me know there is a curb to step down, or that it's full with six inches of water, NO WAY."

There is a scene in a garden where Alex's brother Mitchel says, "Sometimes I think the only thing you have in your life is that damned cane of yours. Does it ever talk to you? Does it ever laugh with you? Does it take you out to dinner? Does it hold you when you need it? You're so damned independent; at least here you're safe." Alex replies, "There isn't a moment in my life that I feel totally safe, here or any place else. Have you ever thought what it would be like to be completely vulnerable to everybody and everything?"

I have been in the National Federation of the Blind for almost ten years. The Federation is made up of blind people from all walks of life possessing all manner of backgrounds and experiences. Many times, when a person becomes blind, there is a period of adjustment while familiarity with the alternative techniques of blindness is developed. In the movie Alex indicates that she became blind at the age of sixteen, meaning that the movie takes place twenty years after the onset of blindness. Although quite stiff and ungraceful, Alex demonstrates a fair grasp of proper cane traveling techniques. She is also shown reading a Braille book. This implies

that Alex received some training in the alternative techniques of blindness. However, it seems that her instructors neglected to help her to develop a positive attitude about herself and her blindness. This, we believe, is by far the most important factor in a person's adjustment to blindness. It is no wonder that Alex, at the outset, is sarcastic, bitter, and determined at all cost to prove her independence although she really has little regard for herself and her ability to get on in the world as an equal with her sighted peers. This is hardly surprising when you consider the deplorable state of agencies for the blind in this country. The overwhelming majority of service providers have no faith in the ability of the blind to compete on a basis of equality. Few (if any) of them regard the blind as either competent or normal.

After the public is introduced to Alex's trials and tribulations as a blind person, a solution presents itself: a dog guide. Alex is finally persuaded that a dog is the answer. Never mind that thousands of blind people across the country are functioning quite well with a cane. Never mind that blindness is not the emotional struggle that Alex portrays it to be. Take heart viewers of America, Alex is now going to get a dog.

In all fairness, I should point out that the data provided about dog guides was well researched and quite accurate. In fact, Alex does one positive thing at the school. She tells another blind student that if they stick together, they can both overcome the fear of getting a dog. If only that concept could have been extended beyond the school and carried to its logical conclusion. Alex

would have done well to have met other blind people who were independent—people who lead ordinary lives and who function independently using either a dog or a cane to travel. Perhaps she might not then have been so anxious to get her sight back.

Even though Alex has graduated from the school as a more confident traveler, it should be noted that she was still ashamed of her blindness. Whenever she went out with Richard, her boyfriend, she never took Emma, her dog.

Never fear, however, the movie does have a happy ending, or so the public is led to believe: Alex recovers her sight, and all of the problems that she encountered as a blind person magically disappear. Perhaps here is the most striking indication of how incompetent Alex was as a blind person. While Alex was blind, Emma (her dog) was permitted by Richard to eat scraps from the table. Alex, being blind, was none the wiser. Never mind that any self-respecting and properly trained blind person would never have tolerated such behavior on the part of the dog guide. Alex is blind and cannot, therefore, tell what is going on even under her very nose. Of course, all of this changes when Alex's sight returns.

In the end Alex demonstrated the kind of condescension and pity that we have become all too familiar with. When she sees a blind girl disoriented in the middle of the street, Alex decides that she must return Emma to the school to help those less fortunate than herself. Alex, in her desire to be kind and helpful, has failed to attack the root cause of the problem—namely, public misunderstanding, lack of opportunity, bad

training, and the ever present efforts of society to coax the blind into immobility and dependence. You see, the vast majority of blind people will never get their sight back and must, therefore, work as hard as possible to instill positive attitudes toward the blind on the part of the general public.

Although the movie did somewhat reveal the embarrassment that some people have when confronted with a blind person, and although some effort was made to show how people are often too helpful as far as a blind person is concerned, the overall impression given was that it is a tragedy to be blind. It seems that the only real solution to the problems of blindness is the restoration of sight.

Ms. Henderson, I must say that "Second Sight" has perhaps done the blind more harm than good, all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. The credits show that National Guiding Eye was the only blindness-related agency consulted in the preparation of "Second Sight." A more positive image might have been presented if CBS had consulted with the National Federation of the Blind. As I indicated in my last letter, the Federation is an organization of blind people banded together to, among other things, eliminate the nineteenth century public thinking that has prevailed about the blind. I hope that you and others at CBS will find future opportunities to consult with the Federation before producing any other works that serve to keep us out of the mainstream of society.

Very truly yours,
Peggy Chong

ANOTHER COMMENT ON "SECOND SIGHT"

New York, New York
April 17, 1984

Mr. Thomas Wyman
Chairman of the Board and
Chief Executive Officer
CBS, Inc.
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Wyman:

On Tuesday, March 13, 1984, CBS aired a movie called "Second Sight: A Love Story." On behalf of the New York City Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, I'd like to express my dismay at the negative image of blindness presented in this film. It is our opinion that this program has impeded the efforts of all blind Americans to live fuller and more productive lives.

"Second Sight" centers around a blind woman, Alexandra, who breaks her pattern of social isolation with the help of a dog guide. Her newly-found confidence gives her the courage to enter into a relationship with a sighted lover, who helps convince her to undergo eye surgery, which finally restores her vision.

Before discussing my major bones of contention with the writers and producers of this t.v. movie, I must acknowledge some progress. Alexandra is shown to be employed, and is living independently in her own apartment. She has spunk, as evidenced by her successful foiling of an attempted burglary, and she is portrayed as fully sexual.

In spite of these nods in the direction of showing a blind person to be

capable and self-sufficient, your writers retreat to the centuries-old stereotypes of incompetence, passivity, and dependence when delivering the movie's main messages about blindness. Here are two examples.

A good part of the film is taken up with Alexandra's dog guide training. This scene ends with Alex and her dog taking a rigorous final exam. They walk through an unfamiliar urban setting, replete with hordes of people, heavy traffic, and numerous construction cites. Alex passes with flying colors, walking in safety and confidence. Only a short time afterwards, however, in an emotional encounter with her lover, Alex resigns herself to the harsh fact that she is unable to accompany him on a business trip to Chicago. Because of her unfamiliarity with that city, it seems that she would be forced to hole up all day in her hotel while her man got on with his busy life. Mr. Wyman, what happened to her dog guide training?

I'm not writing this letter as an art critic, but as a representative of the blind, who suffer with a seventy percent unemployment rate. Hundreds of qualified job applicants have been rejected by employers because of the assumption that a blind worker would find it impossible to travel independently on business. "Second Sight" serves only to reinforce this incorrect and damaging belief.

Toward the end of the film Alexandra is confronted with the opportunity to regain her vision through an operation.

In another emotional scene with her lover, she asks him what he would do if the operation fails. Would he be willing, she asks, to live as a martyr with a blind wife for the rest of his days? His reply is, "I don't know." The only asset of hers that he raises in Alexandra's defense is her knack for smelling things. The message presented here is clear. An intimate relationship with a blind person is necessarily one which demands of a sighted partner the super-human qualities of a saint. Since most people don't think of themselves as saints, most people holding this view would not see themselves as an eligible marriage partner. Mr. Wyman, this encouragement of alienation between the blind and the sighted is the unkindest cut of all.

The National Federation of the Blind, the oldest and largest organization of blind men and women in this nation, believes that with the proper training and opportunity, the blind can live on

terms of equality with the sighted. Our most intractable problem is one of belief; self-belief among the blind, and belief in the essential equality of the blind among the sighted. We insist that in the future, CBS use its vast power more responsibly when it comes to accurate information about blindness.

We would like to assist you in this matter, and believe we are in a good position to do so. I invite you to appear at one of our monthly meetings to learn more about the true nature of blindness. Please don't hesitate to call Mr. Rami Rabby, our Chapter President, for details about the time and place of these meetings. I hope this letter marks the beginning of a broader understanding between CBS and the blind of this nation.

Sincerely yours,
Richard Fox, Secretary
New York City Chapter
National Federation of the Blind

If you or a friend would like to remember the National Federation of the Blind in your will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto National Federation of the Blind, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation, the sum of \$_____ (or "_____ percent of my net estate" or "The following stocks and bonds: _____") to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

NEWS FOR THE NETWORKS

COMMENTS BY CYNTHIA HANDEL

Cynthia Handel is one of the leaders of the National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania. She does not practice her Federationism on a part-time basis—that is, she does not just practice it or think about it when she reads the Monitor, goes to chapter meetings, or talks about it with other members of the movement. She takes it seriously and lives it on a daily basis. Her Federationism is with her when she socializes, when she works and plays, and when she sits down to enjoy a t.v. program.

There may be no immediate and visible result of her contact with the television network, but the effect is there. It is cumulative. In fact, it is more far-reaching and lasting than many of the dramatic confrontations which occasionally occur. As more and more blind people, along with their sighted friends who truly understand, become fully sensitized and aware, the climate of public opinion will inevitably shift accordingly. So it has been with every minority that has ever gone from second-class status to first-class citizenship, and so it is with the blind. It is the snow-balling effect of conversations, letters, speeches, belief, expectation, and attention to detail.

Who can tell how far-reaching the impact of Cynthia Handel's letters may be—how many events for how many years will be triggered by the ripples they set in motion? This is what our movement is about. This is why we have a National Federation of the Blind, and it

is why the world of today is a totally different place from the world of fifty years ago:

Willow Street, Pennsylvania
January 11, 1984

NBC Television
Burbank, California

Re: "Knight Rider" January 1, 1984

Dear Sir/Madam:

Periodically networks, including NBC, have elected to make blindness the theme of a particular episode of a series. Sometimes the main character is a "victim" of blindness, and in other cases such as this, the plot centers around a blind person who supposedly has some sort of extraordinary ability. As a blind person, I watch these programs with some interest. But rather than finding myself enjoying the program, I often begin to critique the performance of the actor portraying the blind person and the manner in which blindness is presented. I cannot think of a single occasion in which I was pleased with the picture drawn: the image that the majority of America sees and accepts as being what it is really like to be blind. I wonder with whom the writers or producers of these programs consult to obtain an accurate image. Is this blind person simply what is believed in

the minds of a sighted writer that it must be like to be blind? Or did someone meet a blind person once and assume that that person is what all blind people are like? As a member of the National Federation of the Blind, the largest organization of blind people in the country, I would like to explain what we would like to portray as our view of blindness and point out what I found wrong with the image which was presented in this program and is generally offered as the stereotypical image of blindness on most television programs.

The woman in "Knight Rider" chose to use a dog guide as her means of travel. She may have given the appearance of a normal blind woman walking with her dog, but there were some things missing. First, she never gave the dog any verbal directions or commands. Had you talked with a dog guide school anywhere in the country, three of which are in California, you would have learned that the dogs do not make these decisions on their own. They must be told to move forward, turn right or left, or come when called. The dog does not automatically know where his/her owner wants to go.

Secondly, when the dog has properly executed the directions given, he/she must be praised. This dog is a working dog, but in place of payment, he/she is rewarded with love and praise. In order for the dog to continue to work properly and want to work for his/her owner, the dog must be told when the work has been done well and must be shown that the person is pleased with the work. By the same token, there must be correction when something is done wrong.

Next, an independent blind person

would not always be in a position to have to wait for someone to get his/her dog in and out of a car. This is something that is the owner's responsibility, to take care of the dog. To her credit, I did notice that at her apartment she did take the harness off and give her dog water.

When a person is blind, it does not automatically mean that the senses are more acute than someone who can see. As a matter of fact, the only thing that is different is that we have learned to rely on our other senses rather than sight. We know how to do things without looking. We do not hear better or smell better nor are we more able to judge how people feel or know what they might be thinking. Just as you know that someone with whom you are close is not feeling well or has something on their mind, we can tell the same thing. But this ability is not due to our blindness. It is simply something that we are aware of because of the closeness we feel for the other person.

Although there are some people who may be particularly good at recognizing voices, I would venture to say that most of the blind people I know would not be able immediately to recognize a person after only talking with him for a brief moment. This would be especially true when the next meeting is on a busy, noisy street after the person has narrowly missed being hit by a car.

The point that I would like to make is that we are people—people who just happen to be blind. Our blindness is simply a characteristic of ourselves as individuals. It is the same as someone who happens to be left-handed or someone who happens to be short or have blonde hair. Just because someone is left-

handed does not make him/her less capable than you nor does it mean that that person has some sort of fantastic ability that has been acquired because he is left-handed. It simply means that since he is left-handed he does things a little differently than you. Above all, he/she is a person. His/her needs and desires are the same as yours. It is the same with a person who happens to be blind. We have jobs, families, homes; we shop, socialize with blind as well as sighted people; and with proper training and given the opportunity, we can compete on an equal level with the sighted world. We don't need special accommodations made for us. We don't need people to feel that they must change their lives or the way that they do things to enable us to accomplish what we need to do. We will do what we have to do, maybe in a little different way than you might accomplish the same thing, but the result is the same. If we need help, we will ask or may be willing to accept assistance that is offered. But we are simply individuals who happen to be blind.

Since television is a good means of education, whether or not a program is intended to be educational, if a positive image of blindness is given, eventually people will begin to realize that what we are saying is true. Blindness need not be a tragedy. It can be reduced to a mere nuisance.

I have enclosed a brochure on the National Federation of the Blind. If you would like more information regarding the NFB, please feel free to contact Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, President, National Federation of the Blind, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230; (301) 659-9314. Also, the next time a program

is done using a blind person as one of the characters, please consider talking with us first to obtain your information. After all, who better can teach you about blindness than a blind person.

Thank you for listening and for your consideration of my criticism as well as suggestions.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Cynthia E. Handel

Willow Street, Pennsylvania
February 10, 1984

NBC Television
Burbank, California
Attention: President

Re: "Night Court"

Dear Sir:

On January 11, 1984, I wrote to NBC regarding a "Knight Rider" television program dealing with a blind woman (copy enclosed). The program was broadcast on January 1, 1984, and I was very disturbed about the image that was portrayed by this program. As I explained in that letter, blind people are simply people who happen to be blind. Blindness is a characteristic.

Although I did not receive a response, I had hoped that someone would read the letter and brochure which I included and might have learned something from the information provided. Unfortunately, I can see that that isn't true.

The "Night Court" program on February 8, 1984, was worse than the January 1 "Knight Rider." The blind man in the program supposedly had the extraordinary

ability to tell what several people were eating at a table, but could not find his way out of the room. In addition, at the end of the program, some mention was made that he had been let off from some shoplifting charges simply because he was blind.

Admittedly, there are some blind people, as is the case with any group of people, who are less than capable and who try to get something for nothing, especially pity. However, when a network such as yours shows this side of a blind person and the only reason for the person being on the program at all is because he/she is blind, it offers the image to viewers that this is what blind people are like and it would be terrible to be blind because they would not want to be like that person.

The National Federation of the Blind has been working since 1940 to eliminate the misconceptions about blindness and to let people know that it need not be a terrible tragedy to be blind. We are people just like everyone else and would like to be treated in the same way as everyone else. Much progress has been made. But each time a program like this is broadcast it sets us back several steps in the minds of Americans watching.

I have enclosed another brochure for your information informing you about the National Federation of the Blind and our work. I would appreciate it if you would read it and the previous letter I've enclosed. Your opinion would be appreciated. I hope you understand my position and can do something to remedy

the situation in the future. Just once, I would like to see a blind person on a program doing a normal job, living a normal life, and simply participating as a part of the program, not just being there because he/she is blind.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Cynthia E. Handel

New York, New York
February 27, 1984

Dear Mrs. Handel:

Your recent letters about the portrayals of blind persons on NBC programs have been referred to me for reply.

We appreciate having your thoughtful, constructive comments, and we have forwarded your advice to the producers of "Knight Rider" and "Night Court."

The characters on these programs are fictional, and many of them possess powers or characteristics that may not exist in real life. We assure you there was no intent to cause distress to anyone who is blind.

We are grateful that you took time to share your views with us.

Sincerely,
William Placek
Public Information
Senior Writer, Audience Services
National Broadcasting Company, Inc.

**KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS:
A LIFESAVING STRUGGLE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE THEM
AND A CHALLENGE FOR THOSE WHO DON'T**

Ed Bryant is an active member of our Missouri affiliate. He is blind. The cause is diabetic retinopathy, a condition he shares with thousands of blind people in the United States. But the effects of diabetes in Ed Bryant's case, as in many others, have not been limited to loss of eyesight. Several years ago, his kidney functioning also began to deteriorate. This is all too common. Frequent dialysis was the only treatment possible.

Then Ed had the opportunity for a kidney transplant, performed last summer at the University of Minnesota Hospital. Federationists will recall the presentation made on the subject of kidney transplants at our 1982 National Convention in Minneapolis. The speaker was Dr. John Najarian, Chief of Surgery, University of Minnesota Hospital. Dr. Najarian is a leading authority on the subject of kidney transplants and one of the foremost successful practitioners. In August, 1983, Ed Bryant took advantage of the opportunity presented by the University of Minnesota facility and received his new kidney donated by his sister. The successful surgery gave him a new lease on life.

But Ed Bryant and thousands of others now find themselves locked in a life or death struggle for the medication needed to prevent their bodies from rejecting new organs, such as in Ed's case, a kidney. The drug he uses is Cyclosporin. It was prescribed for him

following the successful transplant and has worked well to prevent any rejection which would almost certainly occur without the medicine. Cyclosporin is a lifesaver for Ed Bryant. But, his supply will soon run out.

The drug was furnished until June, 1984 under post-operative arrangements made with the University of Minnesota Hospital. This is a common procedure to help transplant recipients survive the first critical months following the surgery. Cost of the rejection-preventing medication is enormous. But in Ed Bryant's case it is not only enormous, it is continuing. The price tag will range from \$139 to \$167 per bottle of this vital medication. The cost will be about \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year. Ed needs a new bottle of Cyclosporin every six days. He and other transplant patients are literally in a race against time. His supply will end in June. Ed cannot afford, with his own resources, to buy the medication, no matter how vital it is to his survival. There are not many in this situation who could afford to pay the price. Private insurance is out of the question.

Ed Bryant writes that his time to secure a permanent solution for obtaining Cyclosporin is short. The challenge he and others face is clear, and everyone can help.

"I had a kidney transplant in August, 1983," he says, "which to date is work-

ing perfectly. I was put on a test drug not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration that is better than anything available on today's market ...

"I was not told what this drug would cost me or that it would cost anything... Each bottle will last approximately six days and I must stay on this medication for life...

"I believe in cost containment in health care, but not at the expense of human life, nor the quality of that life. Cost containment should not be at the expense of needy patients, and they should have access to psychological and emotional involvement in their care along with good quality medication.

"I would request that anyone wishing to help would do the following: (1) There is a bill now in the United States House of Representatives 'The National Organ Transplant Act H.R. 4080' which I hope will become law... The provision in which I am most interested is the one that provides for Medicare to pay 80% of the cost of immunosuppressant drugs used in organ transplantation. (2) My on hand supply of Cyclosporin will last until

the first of June. If House Bill H.R. 4080 does become a federal law it will, in all probability, not do so until the latter part of this year and very possibly until some time in 1985. This means that from June 1 until a law is passed (if ever) I must bear the total cost of Cyclosporin with capital that I do not have. If you can help financially or have any suggestions, I can most assuredly use your assistance."

A special checking account has been set up to handle any donations to give Ed Bryant access to Cyclosporin. Checks should be made payable to "Cyclosporin Fund; CSA Fund; or Ed Bryant." Please be sure and put the Cyclosporin account number 809-502-2367 on all checks, money orders, etc. Checks should be sent to Farm and Home Savings, P.O. Box 1117, Columbia, MO 65205.

Anyone wishing to contact Ed Bryant may do so by writing him at 111A N. Stadium, Apartment #162, Columbia, Missouri 65201. His telephone number is (314) 445-1928.

THE BLIND BEAK OF BOW STREET

by John Dashney

(Reprinted from Lifeprints)

Did you know that one of England's first and greatest policemen was blind?

Sir John Fielding, the younger half-brother of the great English novelist Henry Fielding, was born in 1721. He

joined the navy as a youth, but an accident cost him his sight at the age of nineteen. This was in 1740, nearly 70 years before Louis Braille would be born. There were no radios, no tapes—

no known way for a blind person to be able to read. So what did John Fielding do?

He opened a business which he called the Universal Register Office. This was a combination labor exchange, travel agency, information office, real estate agency, and insurance company. John ran it single-handed. In his spare time, his brother Henry taught him law.

Henry Fielding, when not writing novels such as Tom Jones, had become a magistrate. This was an office something like that of a justice of the peace. Henry had the power to investigate crimes, question suspects, and then either release them or order them held for trial. He was successful enough to be given the title of Chief Magistrate. He was, in fact, what we today would call a chief of police—except that London of the 1750's had no organized police at all!

Imagine a city of over half a million people, terrible slums, a high crime rate, and no real police. The few parish constables were chosen by lot, much as we choose juries today, to serve for one year. Most paid substitutes to take their place, and many of the substitutes were as dishonest as the criminals they were supposed to control. Most of the rest, along with the night watchmen, were too disorganized, too feeble, or too frightened of the powerful street gangs to be of any use.

Henry Fielding tried to change all this. He drew up plans for controlling crime, turned his house in Bow Street into a kind of police station, and hired a few of the best constables to serve as more or less permanent police officers—"Bow Street Runners" was the name by which they would soon be known.

But Henry's health was failing, and in 1754 he had to retire. The position, which would become known as Chief of the Metropolitan Police, was offered to his blind half-brother. John Fielding accepted it and held it until his death in 1780.

John immediately set out to put Henry's plans to work. Within two years his runners had broken up most of the gangs of street robbers. John then organized a horse patrol to combat the mounted highwaymen who prowled the roads leading to and from London. He set up systems of rapid communication and published descriptions of wanted criminals and stolen goods. We take these things for granted now, but the Fieldings were the first to think of them.

John's main skills were in questioning witnesses and suspects. Usually he left the legwork to his runners. But sometimes he investigated cases personally. When, in 1763, Lord Harrington's house was robbed of more than three thousand pounds worth of silver, gold, and jewels (nearly one hundred thousand dollars in today's money!), John investigated the theft personally. Using one of his helpers for his eyes, he spent the whole day and most of the night examining and questioning. He determined that what was made to look like a burglary was really an inside job. His suspicions fell on a servant, who later confessed.

Elementary? Perhaps. But this was more than one hundred years before the first Sherlock Holmes story was written.

About this time John was knighted for his services and became Sir John Fielding. The common people, though, gave him another title—"The Blind Beak of Bow Street." ("Beak" was the 18th-century slang for anyone in a position

of authority.)

A contemporary described Sir John as wearing a black bandage over his eyes and carrying a switch, which he flicked in front of him as he entered or left his courtroom. He was strict with hardened criminals and was responsible for sending many men (and some women) to the gallows. But he was lenient with young people, especially first-time offenders.

There was no welfare or aid for dependent children in the 1700's. Most of London's slum children died before they grew up. Most of the boys who survived became thieves, and most of the girls who survived became prostitutes. Sir John tried to save as many as he could. He helped organize charities to feed and clothe abandoned children, and institutions to teach them reading, writing, and some kind of a trade. As a police official, he saw that the best way to stop criminals was to get to them before they became criminals. In this he was almost two hundred years ahead of his time.

In his role of keeper of the peace, Sir John Fielding often had to intervene

in labor disputes and sometimes even control rioting, angry mobs. As a negotiator, he became known for his fairness toward the workers and apprentices, the poor and underprivileged.

Curiously enough, the one group that Sir John Fielding did not make any special efforts to help was the blind. This was because he considered his own blindness as no great handicap, and assumed that other blind people felt the same way. Speaking of his own blindness, he remarked, "It was an accident, which everyone but myself deemed a misfortune."

London would not have a regular police force until nearly fifty years after Sir John Fielding's death, but many of the rules and guidelines he set down for his Bow Street Runners are still used in police training manuals today.

People often feel that law enforcement is no field for a blind person even to consider. They don't realize that one of the first and greatest police officials ran the London Metropolitan Police for twenty-six years without the aid of any sight.

AMERICAN AIRLINES JOINS THE PARADE

THE DAY OF RECKONING MOVES CLOSER

The following correspondence requires little comment. It exemplifies a pattern which is leading to an inevitable conclusion. The blind of this nation and a number of the airlines are on a

collision course. We will do what we can to avoid confrontation, but there is a limit as to what we will endure. We will not, for instance, accept second-class citizenship, and we will not in-

definitely temporize about it:

Rochester, Minnesota

February 13, 1984

Mr. Robert L. Crandall, President
American Airlines
Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, Texas

Dear Mr. Crandall:

I was a passenger on American Airlines flight 252 from Minneapolis to Washington, D.C. with a stop in Chicago on January 29, 1984. The flight from Minneapolis to Chicago was extremely pleasant, and I wish to compliment the crew.

However, in Chicago a crew change took place. There was about a forty-five minute layover, but I did not deplane. Near the end of this time I was approached by two flight attendants, Judy Franckowiak and Jane Nelson. They informed me and my friend that there had been an error in seating and that we would have to move. My friend, Stewart Prost, sitting next to me in row 15, asked what kind of error had been made. We were given a vague answer that it had something to do with seat assignments. We requested more specific information as to the nature of the error and they said we were violating an FAA regulation.

Mr. Prost and I happen to be blind, and this was apparently the cause of the problem. We were sitting in the row located directly in front of an emergency exit; this is what they claimed was a violation of federal regulations.

We are quite familiar with FAA regulations as they pertain to blind persons and are aware of no such regulations.

But they brought out a book which they claimed came from the FAA.

The page was read to us, and although we did not like it, we moved to row 11.

We asked for a copy of the regulation with the idea that if the FAA did indeed have such a rule, we needed to work with them to change it. We were told that when we landed in Washington an agent would meet us and provide the documentation.

Toward the end of the flight, Mr. Prost, who is able to read some print, asked to see the book from which they had read. We discovered that the book was not from the FAA but was the in-flight manual of American Airlines. They were reading from section 70-1 on page 3. We believe it was published in October of 1981. The passage reads as follows:

"Blind passengers may not be seated in a row forward of, adjacent to, or aft of a window exit or in rows with an overwing exit on wide-bodied aircrafts."

I believe this is an accurate quote from the manual, but I cannot be sure since your ground personnel refused to give us a copy of the regulation. He alleged that it was illegal for him to reproduce it. Our only information came from what Mr. Prost saw in the book, and I copied it as he read it to me.

After we landed, we learned of one final insult. In order that we might be seated in row eleven it was necessary to move two other passengers. They, of course, were sighted. The flight attendants apologized for inconveniencing them and offered to seat them in first-class to make up for the trouble. They told them that it was necessary to move some blind people. Why weren't we offered these seats? Is there a rule

which prohibits blind people from sitting in first-class as well?

Please consider the following points:

1. The Minneapolis crew treated me with the same courtesy which they extended to all other passengers. They never mentioned any special rules.

2. The Chicago crew claimed to be doing their job and were not being intentionally discourteous. They were simply obeying orders (although they misinformed us as to the origin of the rules).

3. Your rule assumes a lack of competence on the part of blind persons. There is no such data to prove that assumption. Blindness is not a factor in how well one handles an emergency.

4. If we are to be expected to follow your rules, as unreasonable as they are, it cannot be illegal for you to provide them to us in writing.

5. Although we should not have been asked to move, further insult was added when we were not offered the first-class seats.

I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind, and I have learned that the biggest problem I face is the lack of confidence that people have in me because of my blindness. With the proper training you, too, can learn to understand that blindness is not a handicap. If you are willing to update your regulations and educate your personnel about the capabilities of blind people, I urge you to contact our President, Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, by writing to the National Federation of the Blind, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230.

I know no harm was intended, but that does not excuse the ignorance displayed by the author of these rules. I am sure

you will want to rectify this situation so that all blind people can fly with their peers on American Airlines in peace.

Sincerely,
Jan Bailey

Dallas/Fort Worth Airport
Texas
March 16, 1984

Dear Ms. Bailey:

You certainly captured our attention with your letter and we are concerned that based on your recent experience with us, you feel our procedures reflect a lack of confidence in individuals who are blind. Our past experience with blind passengers have convinced us of their abilities, and we have only the highest regard and respect for you.

I am pleased part of your letter is complimentary and have sent your comments to the supervisory staff who will extend proper recognition for the good service you received from the crew on the Minneapolis/Chicago portion of your January 29 trip.

Perhaps an explanation of our procedures and why you were moved from the seats previously assigned to you will be helpful. The caption referring to the seating location of blind passengers was read to you from the In-Flight Manual which is part of our operating specifications. Each carrier writes its own specifications which must be approved by the FAA. Once specifications are approved, we must abide by them; otherwise, the FAA may impose a penalty for violating our own procedures. The FAA

also has the right to require changes to our procedures in the event such revisions are necessary in the interest of safety or in the public interest.

Our emergency procedures are based on extensive experience in evacuating aircraft and on many comprehensive studies and tests. We are closely working with the American Federation of the Blind in the interest of improving the emergency procedures information provided to blind passengers. For instance, we are presently preparing emergency procedures cards in Braille which will be available on each aircraft upon request.

In the majority of emergency situations, time is of the essence, and it is important to open exits and begin evacuation as quickly as possible. The over wing exits are not appropriate for children, blind passengers and elderly persons because there is an eight foot drop from the wing to the ground, and the possibility of injury is greater for these individuals. Therefore, they are directed to the exit door which has a slide for evacuation purposes. I want to assure you that we care for your safety and the safety of all our passengers, and it is in your best interest that you are seated in a more appropriate location. Still we are very concerned about the way the entire situation was handled and that the passengers who vacated seats for you were moved to first class. In retrospect, of course, you should have been accommodated in first class and I am sorry you were offended.

I assure you, Ms. Bailey, we have taken your comments seriously. We will reemphasize to our flight attendants the importance of friendly, professional service to every passenger.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on our procedures. Please let me know if I can provide you with additional information or if I can be of assistance to you in the future.

Sincerely,
Ms. A.S. Kuhner
Staff Assistant
Executive Office

Baltimore, Maryland
March 29, 1984

Dear Ms. Kuhner:

I have read the letter dated March 16, 1984, which was sent over your signature to Ms. Jan Bailey; and some of your comments emphasize the problem which we are having with American Airlines. You tell us that you are working with the American Federation of the Blind "in the interest of improving the emergency procedures information provided to blind passengers." There is no "American Federation of the Blind," and we of the National Federation of the Blind are certainly not working with you even though we would if we could do it in a constructive climate and if you showed any interest in having us do so.

Of course, I assume you will say that you are "very sorry" and that it was all a big mistake, just a slip and a misplaced word. This exemplifies the problem we seem to be having with American.

It is not simply a matter of your finding a way to explain to us the procedures. Your letter is revealing. It tells us that blind people, children, and old people have certain characteristics in common—among which are diffi-

culties in maneuvering to evacuate a plane in time of emergency, especially from the over-wing exit. My experience and observation tell me that this is simply not so.

I am blind myself, have directed the rehabilitation programs for the blind for one of the states, and know personally probably seven or eight thousand blind persons. My experience tells me that you are wrong. Furthermore, blind persons in this country are coming to the end of their patience with some of the treatment they are receiving from certain of the airlines.

There are a number of options available to us. Continuing in the present custodial climate created by certain airline personnel is not one of them. For your information I herewith send you certain material which you may or may not find pertinent.

Very truly yours,
Kenneth Jernigan, President
National Federation of the Blind

Dallas/Fort Worth Airport
Texas
April 20, 1984

Dear Mr. Jernigan:

I have reviewed with great interest the address you delivered at Minneapolis in July, 1982, and the issues of the Braille Monitor included with your letter. It is evident that you feel very strongly about the inequities and injustices with which blind individuals must contend, and I understand why you work so hard to reeducate the public. Your efforts are commendable and your

cause is certainly worthwhile. We appreciate your point of view, and I welcome the opportunity to clarify ours.

First, I apologize for providing the incorrect source of our involvement in preparing emergency procedures information in Braille. We are closely working with the American Foundation for the Blind, specifically with Region 5 which is located at 111 West Mockingbird Lane, Dallas, Texas 75247. Should you require additional information, their phone number is (214) 630-8035.

My letter to Ms. Bailey was undoubtedly not what you would have preferred, and I am concerned that you have such a negative impression of its contents and our airline. If we were trying to reveal anything, it was the fact that we care—specifically, for the safety of all passengers and crew members aboard our aircraft. In serving the traveling public as a mass transportation business, we know that some individuals—whether sighted or unsighted—may require assistance, while others in a similar circumstance may not. Although some blind citizens are as independent as you say—and we agree, many are—needs and abilities can vary. Again, because we care for the safety of all passengers, we will not change our seating guidelines and restrictions at the present time.

Thank you for writing. Perhaps, in time you will understand our position and think less harshly of us.

Sincerely,
Ms. A.S. Kuhner
Staff Assistant
Executive Office

Baltimore, Maryland
April 25, 1984

Dear Ms. Kuhner:

Thank you for the candor of your letter of April 20, 1984. In view of the fact that you are working with the American Foundation for the Blind (one of the most regressive agencies dealing with blindness in this country) it is not surprising that you have the attitude you do. You say that because you care "for the safety of all passengers, we will not change our seating guidelines and restrictions at the present time." My answer to you is this: Because you are guilty of gross, unreasonable discrimination and because we care for the safety of all passengers you will change your seating guidelines and restrictions—probably not at this time but very soon. If we can get you to do

it through reason and persuasion, we would prefer it that way. If we cannot, we will use the only tactic which you leave us—confrontation. We will probably first picket. If that does not work, we will probably engage in a mass demonstration (along with full news coverage) to attempt to close down your entire airline for at least a day.

Ultimately human beings will tolerate only so much in the way of prejudice, irrationality, and unreasonable treatment. Then, they will take whatever action they must to assert their rights as first-class citizens. I realize that you do not even understand what I am talking about, let alone agree with it—but perhaps in time you will.

Very truly yours,
Kenneth Jernigan, President
National Federation of the Blind

OUR FINGERS DID THE TALKING

by Michael Freeman

The National Federation of the Blind teaches a positive philosophy of blindness. One of the tenets of this philosophy is that the principal problem is not the physical disability but the social handicap—that complex of erroneous attitudes and misconceptions about blindness held by society. From this belief stems the conviction that the blind are a minority; that the blind must organize to combat the discrimination encountered by this minority.

Yet, within the blind community there exists another minority—a minority within a minority—which encounters misconceptions and erroneous attitudes among the blind as well as in the larger society. This minority—the deaf-blind—are misunderstood in large measure due to the difficulties of spontaneously communicating with its members. But the deaf-blind, too, need the NFB. The deaf-blind can contribute much to the organized blind movement. In order

to include them as an integral part of the NFB, the communication gap must be bridged. A step in this direction was taken by the Clark County Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington on Saturday, March 24, 1984, when a Fingerspelling Workshop was held on the campus of the Washington State School for the Blind in Vancouver.

The workshop was the brainchild of Barbara Freeman, a member of the Clark County Chapter of the NFB of Washington. She contacted Connie Dunford, a trained interpreter for the deaf who had worked with the deaf-blind. Dunford agreed to donate her services as a teacher at the workshop.

The object was to teach fingerspelling (both the alphabet and the numbers) to NFB members who had no previous experience with fingerspelling or communication with the deaf-blind. In addition to Connie Dunford, teachers were Barbara Freeman, Dale Connors, Marilyn Connors, all members of the Clark County Chapter, Mike Freeman (President of the Chapter), and Denise Mackenstadt (member of the Seattle Chapter of the NFB of Washington). Also assisting was a deaf acquaintance of Dale Connors. The students were Al Sanchez, Carol Wedrick, Warren Scott, and Joe Robertson (members of the Clark County Chapter), Gary Mackenstadt (President of the NFB of Washington), and David Hyde (President of the NFB of Oregon).

Considerable thought and effort went into the preparation of the workshop. Barbara Freeman and Connie Dunford prepared verbal descriptions of the fingerspelling letters and numbers. These were then used to start to teach Carol Wedrick and Al Sanchez how to fingerspell. The descriptions were modified

to overcome problems encountered in this initial experiment. The descriptions, together with some practice exercises, were transcribed into Braille and large print for use at the workshop. Volunteer Braille Services of Portland, Oregon, produced large print and thermoform copies of these descriptions.

A preparatory session was held for the teachers one week prior to the workshop. This was done in order to familiarize the teachers with the materials and to give them the opportunity to learn the finer points of fingerspelling. Some final bugs were worked out of the descriptions.

The workshop itself was designed to be easy-going and informal. Chocolate cookies and the "Chocolate Chipper Cake" from the November, 1983, Monitor were served during coffee breaks. Lunch consisted of take-out pizzas. The coffee was kept hot and the pot overflowing during the entire day.

The workshop proved to be a smashing success. Far from being difficult, fingerspelling proved to be surprisingly easy for most participants, apart from a few finger cramps. By mid-morning, most participants had learned the letters and numbers from one through zero and were working on the exercises. By mid-afternoon, participants were conversing on their own and were able to communicate unaided with Dale Connors' deaf acquaintance, Phyllis, and the deaf-blind member of the Clark County Chapter, Teresa Kelly.

Just before lunch a cameraman from the local cable t.v. company arrived to videotape people fingerspelling and people operating the Teletouch (a device which produces one Braille cell composed from metal pins when letters on a key-

board are pressed). This filming resulted in an excellent story on the cable's "Vancouver News Alive" the following Monday.

The workshop proved to be a success that everyone came away from enthusiastic and ready for more. Interest has been expressed in such a workshop by both the Seattle Chapter of the NFB of Washington and the Salem Chapter of the NFB of Oregon. It is hoped that other chapters throughout the country will become interested.

What are the results of the workshop? It will immediately make it easier for Teresa—the deaf-blind chapter member—to participate in NFB activities. This

is only a short-term (though important) consequence of the workshop. In the long run the participants will have opened an avenue of communication with the deaf-blind and will gain thereby understanding of this minority within a minority. The deaf-blind will seem a little less strange and a little more human and real than they were before March 24.

Through such workshops NFB chapters can begin to reach out to help the deaf-blind to achieve their full potential. And, after all, isn't this what the National Federation of the Blind is all about?

AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

IN TROUBLE AGAIN

There was a time when the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville was like apple pie and motherhood. It was non-controversial and highly respected. Everybody thought of it as the place that produced textbooks for the schools for the blind, a place where good things were done and good attitudes fostered.

Over the years that image has eroded until today the Printing House is, to say the least, controversial. It has reduced its staff, lost much of its Braille production business, and got itself into a position of confrontation with progressive elements among the blind.

For several years the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky has tried to get the administration at the American Printing House to discuss the problems. The effort has been fruitless. The blind have now turned to Congress and to the public. There seems to be some evidence that this will be a more promising approach than the past direct negotiations. It is fairly clear that the American Printing House for the Blind is either going to have to get its act together or face devastating readjustment.

There was a time when the Printing House was the only show on the road. You either bought it from the Printing

House, or you didn't get it. Braille books, writing apparatus, tactile maps, large print material, and most anything else involved in educating blind or visually impaired people was ordered from the American Printing House for the Blind as a matter of course. Those days are gone.

Triformation in Florida is getting an increasing share (in fact, the largest share) of the Braille market. Talking book records are being made by Evatone and a variety of other groups. Computers are proliferating and offering new and exciting alternatives. In other words, the American Printing House for the Blind is still living in a bygone era—or, more properly speaking, it is in danger of ceasing to live.

Nobody wants this to happen, least of all the blind. We want the Printing House to move into the modern era and behave responsibly and responsively. However, we will do what we have to do and take what action we have to take. We are simply no longer willing to tolerate the behavior which the American Printing House for the Blind muleheadedly persists in exhibiting.

Here is an article which appeared in the April 4, 1984, edition of the Louisville Times. It shows the tone of the situation and gives clear warning of what is to come if the Printing House does not take positive action:

**Natcher Asks Printer
To Hire More of the Blind**

by Rob Cunningham
Louisville Times Staff Writer

U.S. Rep. William Natcher, D-Bowling

Green, has joined critics of the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville who say the company should hire more blind people.

Natcher is chairman of a House Appropriations subcommittee that is considering a \$5 million appropriation to support the company—the world's largest publisher for the blind.

"When you go back to Louisville, see if you can't hire more blind people," he told company President Carson Nolan, who testified at a hearing Monday in Washington, D.C.

The company employs 440 people. Yesterday, Nolan told Natcher that 20 of those workers are blind or have vision so poor they are legally considered handicapped. Today, he said the actual number of blind workers is 16.

Members of the National Federation of the Blind have been pushing the company for four years to increase that number, federation spokesman David Murrell of Louisville says.

Nolan said he wants more blind employees, too, but he said hiring them is more easily said than done.

"We're making things for the blind. The blind ought to make the things. There's a certain face validity to that," he said.

But the plant's work force has shrunk by 105 people since 1981, he said, and openings are scarce. About 35 visually impaired workers were employed by the company three years ago, but the jobs of those who resigned or retired since then have not been filled, Nolan said.

In addition, much of the work done at the plant is difficult for blind or visually handicapped persons to do, Nolan said.

The company makes books and magazines

in Braille—the embossed writing that blind people can "read" with their fingertips. It also makes tapes and records, large-type books, and teaching aids for schools for the blind.

Blind workers proofread Braille texts at the plant. They collate the pages of the large-type books and make small Braille writers called slates.

Yesterday, one worker was operating a machine that rivets parts for music stands.

But most printing tasks and many other jobs at the plant—handpainting visual aids and moving supplies around the plant—cannot be done by blind workers, Nolan said.

If the company made goods in large quantities, he said, specialized tasks could be tailor-made for blind workers.

But the company makes small quantities of many items, and it is difficult for blind workers to change tasks as often as the company needs them to.

"We need a certain amount of versatility," he said. "They may change [jobs] 20 times a year."

But Murrell, a lawyer, said the problem is that the company has a limited idea of blind workers' potential.

"If what you do is to perpetuate the attitude of the past that the blind are helpless. . .it's self-defeating," Murrell said.

No blind workers have managerial or secretarial jobs there, he said, a fact that Nolan confirmed.

And the company should be required to certify that no qualified blind person is available before it hires a sighted person for any opening, Murrell said.

"If they are not to be a showplace for what the blind can do. . .then we don't have one," he said.

Nolan resents the charge that the company discriminates.

"This is a particularly unfortunate thing for us because it drives a wedge between us and the people we've been trying to serve," he said.

But Murrell said discrimination exists in spite of Nolan's good intentions.

"The problem with prejudice towards the blind is that it's a sympathetic prejudice. It's not an 'I hate you' type of prejudice. It's an 'I pity you' type of prejudice," he said.

Nolan said he does not believe the company will lose its \$5 million annual appropriation, which pays for textbooks for blind schools. He said he plans a continuing effort to increase the number of jobs for blind workers at the plant.

Since 1879, Congress has provided the firm federal funds and required it to offer educational materials to all blind students in the United States through secondary school.

VICTORY IN THE SOUTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE

by Karen Mayry

Employment discrimination against blind citizens of South Dakota is now illegal. On March 6, 1984, Governor

William Janklow signed into law Senate Bill 65. Our legislature unanimously passed our bill which no longer allows

employers to refuse to hire a qualified blind person based only on the fact that he or she is blind. Failure to abide by the law may result in a civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars. Senator Lyndell Petersen and Representative Walter Dale Miller were instrumental in the passage of our bill.

Governor Janklow proposed, by executive order, placing Services for the Visually Impaired under the combined departments of Education and Labor. An action call went out to Federationists across the state. Through our letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and personal contacts to our individual legislators this attempt failed. We in South Dakota became a separate agency in 1976. We have no intention of returning to a position of dealing with more layers of bureaucracy. We will maintain a watchful eye and continue to work towards keeping our separate agency status.

A third legislative achievement was with the vending bill. Unfortunately our governor felt that with the introduction of vending machines to dispense

canned soft drinks at rest areas along the interstate, vast amounts of litter would be produced which does not now exist. Thus, an added burden would be placed upon the Department of Transportation to keep the area clean. Senator Lyndell Petersen stated that if that happened, perhaps the employees would finally have full employment for which they are already being paid. Although the vendors organization in South Dakota was responsible for the initiation of the bill, many of us wrote letters, made telephone calls, talked with legislators, and sent telegrams urging the support of the bill. Through our testimony on behalf of the bill and, later, our personal contacts with legislators, the governor's veto was overridden.

More Federationists participated in our legislative process this year than in the past, and look what happened. We had a most successful year. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to an even more productive 1985 legislative session.

THE NFB OF CALIFORNIA 1984 CONVENTION REPORT

by Patricia Munson

The annual State Convention of the NFB of California was preceded on April 12 and 13 by three seminars. The first was for blind educators, the second for the parents of blind children, and the last addressed the question of the education of blind children. They were co-sponsored by the NFB of California and the

National Association of Blind Educators (NABE). Fred Schroeder, President of NABE; and Susan Ford, President of the Parents of Blind Children Division, NFB; spoke from the perspectives of their respective fields of expertise, making the seminars most interesting to all who participated.

Sharon Gold, President of the NFB of California, gave the first convention session to order on Saturday morning. Peggy Pinder, representative to our state convention from the National Office of the Federation, gave us a very positive update on what is going on in the NFB around the nation.

Since employment is very important to the blind, we had a number of speakers who addressed the subject of employment opportunities for the blind. We also had a number of persons who addressed the topic of modern technology and its use by the blind.

The California Orientation Center for the Blind Alumni Association, Inc., hosted a luncheon. After President James Willows conducted the annual business we heard a very stimulating speech by Peggy Pinder. She told of her experiences at the Orientation Center for the Blind in Iowa. Dr. Jernigan was the director when Peggy was a student, and she strongly states that Dr. Jernigan's personal interest in each student was what made the difference in bringing about success for the students.

Library services are always a burning issue, and this year's speaker gave us much hope for improvements in our service.

The new director for the Department of Rehabilitation in California, Dr. P. Cecio Fontanozo, brought us up to date on what is going on in her department.

We were all thrilled to hear Mr. Kien Pham, who was a special assistant to Senator Gary Hart. Mr. Pham is a refugee from Vietnam who has not only mastered the English language but also how to use our political process. He is most definitely an inspiration to us. We closed our Saturday afternoon session

with Hank Dekker's recollections of his sailing the Pacific solo. As most know, he is the blind man who sailed alone from San Francisco to Hawaii last year.

The highlight of the evening banquet was a speech by Peggy Pinder, which addressed the topic of our past and present as blind people and how we, the blind, can bring about positive change for our future.

Sunday we all gathered for an early morning breakfast in order that the chapter members could share experiences and gain new ideas in the running of our movement at the "grass roots" level.

The Sunday session got underway with a very interesting report concerning our affiliate in Washington State. As usual, we were very pleased and honored to have Hazel tenBroek back with us in California, for as everyone knows, she now resides in the state of Washington. Susan Ford also reported on the activities of the affiliate in Missouri.

We never tire of hearing why we are Federationists, and this year Fred Schroeder shared his reasons with us. He certainly demonstrates to all of us that being a Federationist is synonymous with success.

Before Peggy Pinder had to catch a flight back to Iowa she enlightened us about her life as an assistant district attorney. Of course, she gave us background on how she got the job, and she too told us of what it means to her to be a Federationist.

Before adjournment, elections were held. The state officers are: President, Sharon Gold; First Vice President, James Willows; Second Vice President, Nancy Smalley; Secretary, LaVeryl Johnson; Treasurer, Lawrence Marcelino. Re-elected to the Board of Directors was

Jan Uribes, and newly elected board Members were: John Bates and Nick Medina.

As we said our goodbyes and made our way home we all certainly knew and know why we are Federationists in California.

We have made great progress since the founding of the NFB in 1940, but until all the blind have security, equality, and opportunity, our cause shall go marching on.

FACTS FROM THE FILES

by Gerry Paice

Of the great number of blind people in this country who are employed, one out of every seven earns his sustenance in a sheltered workshop for the blind, which is permitted through the Fair Labor Standards Act to pay its blind workers hourly wages as low as twenty-five percent of the minimum wage stipulated by our federal government. This exemption arrangement was enacted in 1938 as part of the original law and was modified only slightly some years ago.

In 1977 a random check of fund balance sheets from thirty-six workshops for the blind in the U.S., one-third of the National Industries for the Blind system, revealed that seventy-seven percent had excess income over expenses. These are the actual figures contained in official reports filed with IRS.

Blind men and women with initiative have also aspired to make a place for themselves in the radio and television fields. A familiar blind personality in the Springfield, Massachusetts, area in 1971 was Paul Caputo. Paul graduated from American International College in 1969. While at school he performed as a

disc jockey and engineer at his college FM station and was editor of the local county radio association journal.

In 1982, according to a Randolph-Sheppard report, there were 3,112 vending facilities on federal property and elsewhere being operated by 3,729 blind vendors. Some are new and some have been operating such facilities for many years, demonstrating once again that blind people have the urge and the wherewithall to be self-sustaining.

Although widely published statistics from reputable sources in the early 1970's declared that the majority of blind persons in the United States at that time were between 55 and 80 years of age and only two percent were children under eighteen, very few of the organizations characterized as agencies serving the blind of the nation had programs designed exclusively for the elderly blind. Two-thirds of these agencies sponsored programs aimed chiefly at children and young adults.

Jointly sponsored by the Iowa Commission for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, and the fraternities

and sororities of Drake University, the first teach-in on blindness ever to be offered for participation by interested persons in the United States was held in Des Moines, Iowa, in October of 1970. More than a thousand members of the general public attended the three-hour session designed to replace fantasy with fact. Drake students distributed 100,000 informational leaflets to interested parties throughout the area, and this effort was given added emphasis by national television coverage.

According to information made public as far back as the 1950's by GAF Corporation, a manufacturer of film, the production of the average blind person working in its darkroom facilities was 170 rolls of film an hour as compared to their sighted darkroom employees who handled an average of 125 rolls of the same film under the same conditions.

While there is a very definite increase in optimism among blind individuals with initiative, discrimination based on prejudice and archaic thinking is still a grave matter of concern. We are aware of the strides we have made in this latter part of the twentieth century and yet, as recently as 1973, the Board of Education of the Denver, Colorado, Public School System had a code of physical guidelines prohibiting the employment of blind teachers. Fortunately, the same rigid discrimination did not prevail throughout the nation. At that particular time more than three hundred blind teachers were demonstrating their capabilities at all grade levels from Massachusetts to California.

On June 23, 1972, the President of the

United States signed the Education Act amendments of 1972, one section of which forbids discrimination against blind individuals in any educational institution receiving federal funds. The National Federation of the Blind, without support from any other organization identifying itself with blind people, fought long and hard for the enactment of this law.

The right to serve on our nation's juries has long been a concern of the Federation, and although the process has been slow, it has been steady. One of the latest NFB accomplishments in this regard has resulted from the effort put forth by our Illinois affiliate. No longer can blind individuals in Illinois be excluded from jury duty on the grounds of blindness alone.

Are you aware that all eyeglasses and sun glasses manufactured or sold in the U.S. must have impact-resistant lenses? Such a regulation was issued in 1971 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in an effort to curb the degree of blindness in the nation as a result of accident.

The World Health Organization has been proclaiming for some time now that simple malnutrition is a leading cause of blindness in under-developed countries. There has been progress throughout the world in the attempt to eliminate this problem, but the situation still prevails.

There are almost half a million blind people in the United States according to the best available statistics. Of these, more than 30,000 are children.

RECIPE

JOYCE'S WEIGHTWATCHERS WATERLOO COCONUT CAKE

by Joyce Webb

(Note: Harvey and Joyce Webb now live in Kansas City, Kansas. Both formerly lived in Louisiana and later in Tennessee. Harvey was the first President of the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana.)

Ingredients: One package yellow cake mix
One can Eagle Brand milk
One can cream of coconut (used in various tropical drinks)
One eight ounce container Cool-Whip
Small bag of shredded coconut

Directions: Bake yellow cake mix according to instructions in a nine by thirteen inch pan. Pour over the cake in this order: the Eagle Brand milk, the cream of coconut, the Cool-Whip and then sprinkle shredded coconut on top.

All this should be done while the cake is still warm from the oven. Allow it then to cool to room temperature and then keep refrigerated.

You will almost need to eat it with a spoon.

MONITOR MINIATURES ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

♦Elected:

"The following were elected officers of the Northern Indiana Center of the Blind, Inc., NFB of Indiana, during the March meeting: Karen Swift, re-elected

President for second term; Albert (Anna) Yerga, re-elected Vice President for second term; Sandy Newman, re-elected Treasurer for second term; Ron (Ril) Mis, elected new Braille Recording Secretary; and Mary Kambol, re-elected Associate Secretary and has held this

position for the past 12 years of the local chapter."

◇Information Wanted:

Would any blind parachutist using adaptive equipment please contact me with resource data: Paul Brubaker, Box 119, Monterey, Virginia 24465.

◇Royal National Institute for the Blind:

The Royal National Institute for the Blind, 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA, says:

"You may be interested to know that the RNIB Braille library loans Braille books to blind individuals and organisations in over 80 countries. Our books cover a wide range of subjects from simple books on learning English to advanced texts for university students. We also stock texts in foreign languages. We have plays, poetry and literary criticism in English. (English fiction is stocked by the National Library for the Blind, Cromwell Road, Bredbury Stockport, Cheshire, England.) Library books are loaned to overseas borrowers for up to six months. There is no charge for membership of our library. If you know of any blind individuals who would like to use our service, please ask them to write to me so that I can send them application forms and catalogues. We can also supply you with a copy of our library catalogue, if you wish. Yours sincerely, Ian L. Chorley, Circulation Librarian."

◇Randolph Honored:

The following article appeared in the March 26, 1984, edition of the Clarksburg (West Virginia) Telegram

"U.S. Sen. Jennings Randolph, who is

retiring next January after 50 years in political life, was praised this weekend for gaining passage of the law giving the blind the right to establish vending businesses in federal buildings.

"Before the act was passed, the blind 'were nowhere—we were in the back rooms, or we were weaving rugs or making brooms,' said James Gashel of Baltimore, legislative coordinator for the National Federation of the Blind.

"Gashel said at a testimonial dinner for Randolph, D-W.Va., in Charleston on Saturday night that the Randolph-Sheppard Act has served 'as a hallmark to what government can do to benefit a group of oppressed people.'

"For the first time, people came to know that the blind can work, that the blind can cut it on their own,' Gashel said at the dinner, which was sponsored by the West Virginia chapter of the blind federation.

"Richard Porter, president of the West Virginia chapter, said Randolph has stood up for the law ever since it was signed in 1936.

"He's never failed us in any request we've made,' Porter said.

Randolph, 82, recalled that he began working for the blind in the early 1930s after he was elected governor of the state's Lions Clubs.

"I went to the West Virginia School for the blind in Romney, and found 66 children who might benefit from eye surgery,' Randolph said.

"The veteran senator said his club raised \$3,000 to bring the children to the Blaydes Clinic in Bluefield for surgery. The late Dr. J.E. Blaydes volunteered to perform the operations for free. More than 60 percent of the surgery was successful, Randolph recalled.

Randolph said that as a result of the Randolph-Sheppard Act, there are 3,729 blind vendors nationwide with average salaries of more than \$16,000."

◇Insurance Discrimination Successfully Combated:

Federationist James Moynihan writes as follows:

I previously brought this matter of insurance discrimination to your attention. This concerned the refusal of Jackson National Life Insurance Company to grant a waiver of premium for an insurance policy which I purchased for my son. Thanks to the work of fellow Federationists Tom Stevens, Jim Omvig, and John Dower this problem has been rectified. The waiver of premium provision has now been added to the policy.

◇Battery Wisdom:

Gerry Paice of Massachusetts writes as follows:

"When buying batteries for your talking calculator, talking clock, or any other device, you should become familiar with the meaning of the number and letter code on the package for this code establishes just how long these batteries have been waiting to be moved off the shelf. This is important since shelf life will be a factor in determining the amount of battery energy you are actually purchasing. The first number stands for the year in which the batteries were manufactured: 1 for 1981, 2 for 1982, 3 for 1983, etc. Following the number is a letter, the first twelve letters of the alphabet representing the twelve months of the year: A designating January, B, February, etc. Following this are numbers indicating the day of the month. We learned all this the hard

way, so I thought I would pass it on to Monitor readers.

◇Access to Life:

A taped-format magazine called News-line is now available to the blind and print-handicapped through Access to Life and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC).

Each 30-minute tape includes news of the Unitarian Universalist denomination and UUSC's work world-wide on human rights issues; consumer, legal, and medical information of particular interest to the visually impaired; and poetry, music, and interviews. A four-issue subscription is available for \$6.00 through Access to Life, Box 280, Boston, Massachusetts 02113; (617) 367-8712.

◇Office for Aging:

The following release was recently received from the Suffolk County, New York, Department for the Aging:

"Brad Greenspan, Neighborhood Aide, transferred to our office from the Labor Department. Brad, who has been blind since birth, graduated from Central Islip High School and St. Lawrence University, where he majored in Sociology.

"Brad has many interests including horseback riding and 'ham' radio. Brad holds an Amateur Extra Class license, which is the highest possible for 'hams' in this country. Brad has continued his interest in learning, having completed five Business Management courses from the Hadley School for the Blind's correspondence program.

"Brad is actively involved with the Long Island Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind. Brad will be developing programs for professionals working with blind and visually impaired

senior citizens as well as developing resource information for the blind elderly. 'Blindness does not have to be a tragedy. With proper training, opportunity, and encouragement it can be reduced to a mere inconvenience. If I am able to provide these to just one senior citizen when it is needed most, I will be a success,' Mr. Greenspan declared."

◇Writers Division:

From Lucy Carpenter, Corresponding Secretary, NFB Writers Division, and President, Eastern Orange County Chapter, NFB of New York State:

Writers are for the most part shy people. After all, writing is the loneliest job in the world, and we need one another for encouragement and self-confidence. Our fervor for writing is weakened with the arrival of each rejection slip. We need to join forces, if for nothing else but to share these experiences and to work out the problems encountered by us who are striving to write in spite of disappointments. Come to the Writers Division meeting in July at the National Federation of the Blind convention in Phoenix and tell us of your aims in the writing field and what we can do to help each other to attain that goal. If but one of us is published in the next year, it will be a great triumph for our division and for NFB. Join us. Our present members numbering thirty-five Federationists are anxious to welcome you.

◇NFB in Computer Science Personal Computer Usage Panel:

At the NFB in Computer Science division meeting during our national convention in Phoenix, there will be several program items and a general discussion

dealing with problems encountered by blind persons using personal computers, along with solutions to some of the problems. Even though some of the topics may be technical, we want to hear from persons who have experience with personal computers on the job or in the home, regardless of whether the usage is related to employment in the data processing area. If you have suggestions related to our program, especially if you have specific ideas on what features make personal computers more useful to blind people, please call or write me: Steve Jacobson, 5613 Oliver Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55419; telephone (evenings) 612-927-7694. Ideas formulated through our discussion will likely affect future products.

◇Position Available:

The Wisconsin Council of the Blind, Inc. is seeking candidates for the position of Executive Secretary, to commence work on January 1, 1985. Salary: \$20,000 plus fringe benefits (negotiable). For further details and application, write to: Wisconsin Council of the Blind, Inc., 1245 East Washington Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. Applications must be returned by August 31, 1984.

◇Prairie State Chapter:

At the April 7 Annual Meeting of the Prairie State Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois Allen Schaefer of Mazon was re-elected President. Schaefer was first elected Chapter President in 1979 and prior to that served as NFBI State President from 1974 to 1978. Other officers re-elected were: Vice President, Bill Isaacs of

Bourbonnais; Secretary, John Salvatore, Joliet; and Treasurer, Mrs. Ruth Anne Schaefer of Mazon. Board members elected were Jack and Charlene McLaughlin of Frankfort and Carl Miller of Bonfield. Bill and Ruth Isaacs were honored with a floral gift for their outstanding work in the financial development of the chapter, state, and nation. In a national contest to recruit Associates of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) the Isaacs are in first place, having 238 Associates.

◇New Chapter:

David Arocho writes:

"We are happy to announce the establishment of a brand new chapter in our New York State affiliate. The National Federation of the Blind of Suffolk County is a dynamic group and will be an invaluable addition to the movement in the state. Its officers and board of directors are: Guy Cornils, President; Patty Cornils, Secretary-Treasurer; Robert Linz, Vice President; Esteban Fuentes and Susan Calvitto, Members at Large. If you live in the Suffolk area, contact Mr. Cornils at (516) 928-0070."

◇Talk-Net:

Bob Branco of Massachusetts writes:

"Dear Fellow Federationists:

"Our attempts to have our public service announcements broadcast over Talk-Net are at a stalemate. A year ago I sent the producer, Mr. Maurice Tunick, one of the latest radio commercials put out by our fine President, Dr. Jernigan. Mr. Tunick wrote a letter to me weeks later indicating that he believed that our spots were of excellent quality. He did indicate, however, that he would put us on a waiting list because we would be

competing with other organizations who are also making the same attempts to get Talk-Net to air their spots.

"I submitted the spots to Tunick in March of 1983, and in early May Tunick sent me the letter. In July I launched a huge letter-writing campaign to Tunick, informing him of the value these spots had and that he would do thousands of blind people in the United States a good turn if he were to air the spots. I started the campaign in the state, using the public relations office and phone correspondence. The campaign turned into a nationwide one, as I began utilizing the Braille Monitor and the Presidential Releases to inform everyone of what I was attempting. Since July I have written to Mr. Tunick four times and never received a response. If he is still planning on airing the spots, we must keep the letters coming. If you are aware of my campaign, and if you have written to Tunick in the past, please do so again to maintain the flow of letters. He must be encouraged to do what he can for the blind of this nation, particularly now that it has become apparent that many blind people listen to Talk-Net and call up their programs seeking advice. Here is the address of Talk-Net in order that you may write to the producer to encourage him to air our spots: Maurice Tunick, Producer, Talk-Net, NBC Radio Network, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10020. This may turn out to be another giant leap for our movement involving the public of this nation."

◇Tennessee Convention:

The convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee was held the second weekend in March. After a

number of years of energetic leadership, Lev Williams of Memphis stepped down as President. He was succeeded by Thomas Franklin, Jr., also of Memphis. Lev will be the delegate to the national convention in Phoenix. Over 160 people were in attendance, and the meeting was spirited. Others elected were: Joel Tinnin, First Vice President; Reginald Lindsey, Second Vice President; Josephine Johnson, Secretary; Jackie Sweatt, Treasurer; Marvin Kerley, Board Member; Lester Davenport, Board Member; Mattie Seay, Board Member; June Grant, Board Member; Ruth Broadnax, Board Member; and Lev Williams, Board Member.

◇Federationist Honored:

The following item appeared in the March 25, 1984, issue of the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Gazette:

Dolores M. Reisinger, rehabilitation teacher for the Iowa Commission for the Blind and president of the Cedar Rapids National Federation of the Blind, has been named "Woman of the Year" by the CRIABWA chapter of American Business Women.

◇New Chapter:

On April 13, 1984, a new chapter of the NFB of Nebraska was formed, the Platte Valley Chapter. Jean Ferguson of Scottsbluff was elected as President.

Other officers include: Grace Fettes as Vice President; and Karen Conrad as Secretary-Treasurer.

◇Talking Book Machines for Sale:

The Prose and Cons Braille Unit of the Nebraska State Penitentiary has cleaned, reconditioned, and restored AE series talking book machines for sale. These machines have a solid wood case and play all three speeds of talking book records. The cost is \$12.50 per machine. The Prose and Cons Braille Unit also provides service and repairs for these and other talking book machines. Their basic charge is \$6.00 for cleaning, adjusting, and a new needle. Parts are charged at cost. If the machine is not repairable, a \$6.00 credit will be given towards a reconditioned machine. (The net cost being, therefore, \$6.50.) To order these machines contact: Prose & Cons Braille Unit, P.O. Box 2500, Lincoln, Nebraska 68502; telephone (402) 471-3161 Ext. 373.

◇Hospitalized:

Rosamond Critchley, one of the long-time leaders of the Massachusetts affiliate, has been hospitalized at the Emerson Hospital in Concord, Massachusetts. After she entered the hospital, there were complications, and major surgery was required. At the time of this writing we do not have further information.

